



US Department of Interior
Firefighter & Law Enforcement Retirement Team
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**FIREFIGHTER
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER**

SPECIAL RETIREMENT PROGRAM

**EMPLOYEE
INFORMATION**

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Why were firefighter and law enforcement officer special retirement provisions established?

Special retirement legislation was enacted to provide early retirement for firefighters (FF) and law enforcement officers (LEO) because of the rigorous physical requirements of their positions, as well as to maintain a young workforce capable of the vigorous demands of the occupations. A more liberal formula is used to compute the amount of annuity allowing earlier voluntary retirement to be economically possible.

What is the definition of a "firefighter"?

A firefighter is an employee occupying a position, whose "primary" duties are to perform work directly connected with the control and extinguishments of fires; and are sufficiently rigorous that employment opportunities should be limited to young and physically vigorous individuals. This definition also includes an employee who occupies a rigorous firefighter position and then moves directly to a secondary position and meets the conditions for coverage.

What is the definition of a "law enforcement officer"?

A law enforcement officer is an employee who occupies a position, whose "primary" duties are the investigation, apprehension, or detention of individuals suspected or convicted of offenses against the criminal laws of the US; or the protection of officials of the US against threats to personal safety (FERS only); and are sufficiently rigorous that employment opportunities should be limited to young and physically vigorous individuals. This definition also includes an employee who occupies a rigorous law enforcement officer position and then moves directly to a secondary position and meets the conditions for coverage.

What are the conditions for FF/LEO special retirement coverage?

Primary/Primary Rigorous An employee's service in a position that has been determined by the employing agency head to be a primary firefighter or law enforcement officer position is covered under the provision of the special retirement program.

Secondary An employee's service in a position that has been determined by the employing agency head to be a secondary firefighter or law enforcement officer position is covered under the provision of the special retirement program if **ALL** of the following criteria are met:

The employee is transferred directly, without a break in-service exceed 3 days, from a primary position to a secondary position;

AND

The employee has been continuously employed in the secondary position(s) since transferring from a primary position without a break in service exceeding 3 days. (Employees covered by FERS, must have a minimum of 36 months covered primary service before transferring to a secondary position).

How do I know if I am covered under special retirement provisions?

If covered:

- ✚ You are subject to an extra one-half percent retirement deduction, **and**
- ✚ The retirement code on your SF-50B, Notification of Personnel Action, Block 30 will indicate either:

6 = CSRS Special; E = CSRS Offset Special; or M = FERS & FICA Special

Evidence of coverage approval will be documented on your position description of record or in a Department or OPM service coverage approval letter.

How is coverage determined?

Authority to determine special retirement coverage is delegated to the agency head. The authorized agency official for the Department of Interior (DOI) is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Performance, Accountability and Human Resources.

What is maximum entry age (MEA)?

The Secretary of Interior has established a MEA of 37 for entry or re-entry into firefighter or law enforcement officer primary or primary/rigorous positions. The MEA policy was developed because primary and primary/rigorous positions require "young and vigorous" individuals to perform the arduous work required of the position.

If covered by special retirement provisions, when can I voluntarily retire?

You can voluntarily retire at age 50 with a minimum of 20 years covered and creditable service; or, at any age with 25 years of covered and creditable service (**FERS only**).

What is mandatory separation?

Age 57 with 20 years of covered and creditable service under the special retirement

Exemption from mandatory separation until age 60 applies when an employee has reached age 57, but has not completed the required 20 years of covered service under the special retirement.

Exemption from mandatory separation beyond age 60 may only be granted by the President of the United States in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 8425(c).

A mandatory separation is not an adverse action under 5 C.F.R. § 752 or a removal action under 5 C.F.R. § 359.

How is the basic FF/LEO annuity computed?

The CSRS basic annuity formula is: 2.5 percent x high-3 average salary, multiplied by 20 years; plus 2 percent x high-3 average salary, multiplied by any additional years of creditable service exceeding 20 years.

The FERS basic annuity formula is: 1.7 percent x high-3 average salary, multiplied by 20 years; plus 1 percent x high-3 average salary, multiplied by any additional years of creditable service exceeding 20 years.

What are my responsibilities as a firefighter or law enforcement officer in a position(s) covered by special retirement provisions?

You should check to ensure that special retirement coverage has been approved for your position(s). If evidence of coverage is not found, you should work with your respective servicing Human Resources Office to obtain information/coverage ruling on your position description(s).

You should maintain a work history summary, documenting all creditable service in covered positions.

You should check to be sure you are placed under the correct retirement code and that the appropriate deductions are being taken.

What are the differences between position and individual coverage?

Position coverage refers to coverage of a position description that meets all of the specific requirements for primary/primary rigorous or secondary coverage respectively. The coverage **is effective as of** the classification date and continues as long as the position is **active, providing coverage for all incumbents**. A change in the title, series, grade, major duties, or position number/classification requires new position description coverage **determination**.

Individual coverage refers to coverage applied only to the individual who **initiates and receives approval for a** claim for service and it is only valid for the time the individual occupies the position. Coverage does not **extend** to other incumbents of that same position. **(they do not have to reclaim service every year!)**

What if my position is not covered, but I think it should be?

If you believe that your current or past service is/was in a position that has not been approved for special retirement coverage, but you believe it should be creditable, you may initiate an individual claim for coverage for that service.

How do I file an individual claim?

To initiate a claim, you must make a request in writing stating you would like a review and determination of coverage for your past service. It is important to show which service you feel meets the primary coverage and which service meets the secondary coverage requirements. **Individual claims and questions regarding your claim should be submitted to:**

Department of Interior
Firefighter and Law Enforcement Retirement Team (FLERT)
300 E. Mallard, Suite 170
Boise, ID 83706

Who do I contact for further information?

The Special Retirement Coordinator in your servicing Human Resources Office can answer your help special retirement questions, or refer you to other appropriate contacts.